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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/10/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [KNNP](#) [VE](#) [KN](#)

SUBJECT: EVEN VENEZUELA CONDEMNS NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR TEST

REF: A. STATE 166404

[1](#)B. STATE 169418

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT DOWNES,  
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Embassy conveyed Ref A points regarding North Korea's nuclear test plans to MFA North American Affairs Director Yaneth Arocha prior to North Korea's October 8 announcement of a nuclear weapons test. In addition, Ambassador spoke on the phone with MFA Vice Minister for Asia and the Middle East Vladimir Villegas, who was in New York on UN business. MFA officials provided no substantive feedback on U.S. views at the time. Ambassador has requested to meet with Villegas upon his return and Embassy will convey Ref B message as soon as possible.

[1](#)2. (U) Speaking to the local press on October 9, Venezuelan Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro condemned North Korea's nuclear test, and condemns all nuclear tests for the "immense damage they cause to the planet." Noting that Venezuela maintains a "policy of principles" on nuclear energy, Maduro said Venezuela opposes the proliferation of nuclear weapons, is working in international fora to persuade nuclear powers to eliminate their stockpile progressively, and is supportive of nuclear-free zones, including one for the Americas. He stressed that Venezuela only supports the peaceful and humanitarian use of nuclear energy.

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: President Chavez has worked hard to improve relations with international pariahs like Iran, Syria, and Belarus, and the Venezuelan government is by no means a credible non-proliferation partner. Nevertheless, the BRV has not been visibly courting North Korea of late: Chavez did not travel to North Korea during his world tours this summer, for example. Maduro's public condemnation of the North Korean nuclear test was almost certainly calibrated to give a more moderate gloss to the BRV's radical foreign policy prior to next week's UNGA vote for filling UNSC vacancies.

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